

Administration of Joseph R. Biden, Jr., 2023

Remarks at the Democratic National Committee Winter Meeting in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

February 3, 2023

The President. Hello, Democrats!

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Folks——

Audience member. We love you, Joe!

The President. Well, thank you.

Audience member. We love you, Joe!

The President. My name's Joe Biden, and I'm Jill Biden's husband. And I want to be real clear: She's a Philly girl. So there's no way I can stand here today without saying: "Go, Eagles! Fly, Eagles, fly!" None!

I tell you what: Thank God I'm a Philadelphia professional sports fan——

Audience members. [*Inaudible*]—Eagles!

The President. ——because if I wasn't a fan, I'd be sleeping alone. [*Laughter*]

And by the way, let's give Kamala another round of applause. She's a great Vice President.

And I want to say a special thanks to Jaime for his leadership and to all the members of the DNC for your service, for all you've done for the party and for the Nation, because that's why we're in this business: for the Nation.

Standing here, I'm reminded, just a few months ago, we ended the 2022 midterm election with a rally here in Philly. Remember the midterms?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. Remember how our friends in the press and pundits alike, and even some in our own party, were predicting a giant red wave? Well, guess what? [*Laughter*] It never happened.

Instead, we had a historic performance. We added Democratic Governors, we kept the U.S. Senate, and we ranked closer than anyone ever thought possible in the House. And we flipped control of four State legislative chambers, including the statehouse right here in Pennsylvania.

And how'd we do it? We knew what we were for. And we had great candidates like Josh Shapiro and John Fetterman here in Pennsylvania, both standing for—standing up for personal freedoms, the right to choose, standing up for democracy, and running on our record.

You know, as of this month, we've created 12 million new jobs. We created more new jobs in 2 years than any President did in their entire term. And that's because of you. The strongest 2 years of growth in history by a longshot; 3.4 percent unemployment, the lowest in 54 years.

And the last time employment was this low was—unemployment was this low was in 1969, in May of '69. Think about that.

What's more, Black and Hispanic unemployment is near record lows. More Americans applied to start small businesses—more Americans—in 2 years than any year on record.

The biggest investment in American infrastructure since Eisenhower's administration, the Interstate Highway System. Our roads, our highways, bridges, ports, airports, clean water systems, high-speed internet, rail.

Lower health care costs and lower prescription drug prices, not only including that \$35 a month for insulin, but come January of next year, what we've already passed: No senior will have to pay more than \$2,000 a year for their prescription—a month. A month.

And some of the cancer drugs, as you unfortunately—many of you know—is \$10-, \$12-, \$14,000 a year.

The first Black woman on the Supreme Court of the United States of America: Ketanji Brown Jackson!

Audience member. Yeah, Ketanji!

The President. And by the way, more appellate court judges who are Black women than every other President combined. Every other President combined.

The most significant gun control passed in 30 years. We've got more to do, including getting rid of assault weapons and magazines and—[inaudible].

And as already been mentioned, the biggest investment in tackling the climate crisis in the history of not only this country, but the history of the world.

So, folks, that's not even all of it, not even close. In fact, let me say something. We're just getting started. No, I'm telling you. I don't think many of you believed when I told you we were going get a lot done after the first year, when we—all the things we said we were going to do. I don't think some of you—although you've been good to me, I don't think you really believed—[laughter]—that we were going to do as well as we did in the off-year election.

But we've got a lot more to do. We've got a lot more to do. And by the way—by the way, we paid for everything we did. And unlike Republicans, we cut the deficit \$1.7 trillion in 2 years. You know how we did it? We said, "You know, the superwealthy maybe should pay a little bit." [Laughter] And it ain't even close yet. I intend to get it done—more done.

So let me ask you a simple question: Are you with me?

Audience members. Yes!

The President. I ran for President——

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Well——

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. I ran for President—[laughter].

Audience members. Four more years! Four more years! Four more years!

The President. Well, thank you. I ran for President for three reasons, and I made no bones about it.

The first was to restore the soul of the Nation: honesty, decency, dignity, rooting out racism, treating everyone with respect, giving hate no safe harbor.

The second reason I said I was running, you remember, is that I said I was going to rebuild the backbone of the Nation, the middle class. No more trickle-down economics.

I lived not far from here, in Claymont, Delaware, and before that, in Scranton. Not a whole lot trickled down to my kitchen table when I was growing up. To give people who built this Nation a real shot.

And the third reason—which turned out many thought was impossible, and, I must tell you, I was wondering for a little bit there—was to unite the country. We are a democracy. You cannot govern without consensus. It's not possible. This is still the hardest thing to get done. But I refuse to give up. We can't give up. We need to come together as a nation.

Look, I came to the Presidency determined to put an end to trickle-down economics. The view from Park Avenue says: When the wealthy do very well, the big tax breaks are going to enable them to do that; maybe, maybe it will trickle down to everybody else.

Well, guess what? There's another view. Another view—the one that I hold and I believe a majority of the American people hold, like the folks here in Philly; like where I was born in Scranton; like Claymont, Delaware, just a few miles from here. No, I really mean this. The view that American workers are ready to work harder than anyone else; they just need a shot. I really mean it. All they need is a shot. They get up every morning and go to work and bust their necks trying to make an honest living.

My dad used to say—and he literally would say this. He said: "Joey, a job is about a lot more than a paycheck. It's about your dignity. It's about respect. It's about being able to look your kid in the eye and say, 'Honey, it's going to be okay.'" And he meant it. Not a joke.

Look, I've said it many times. Wall Street, important as it is, didn't build this country. The middle class did. And by the way, unions built the middle class.

Folks, look, we need to build our Nation. We really do have to build our economy from the bottom up and the middle out and not from the top down. Because when the middle class does well, everyone does well. The poor have a shot, the rich still do very well, and the middle class have a little breathing room, as my dad would say.

For decades, the backbone of America—the middle class—have been hollowed out. I mean literally hollowed out. Good-paying manufacturing jobs moved overseas because labor was cheaper, and corporations went overseas. We exported jobs and imported product. Once-thriving cities and towns became shadows of what they used to be.

When those towns were hollowed out, something else was lost: our pride, a sense of self-esteem, sense of self-worth.

Those of you who are over 40, did you ever think we'd be in a situation where blue-collar workers would vote Republican?

Audience members. No!

The President. No, no, let's—we've got to be honest, man. Because they think we forgot them. They think we don't care. They're coming back, but they—that's what they thought.

When those jobs left, a lot were left out and left behind. A lot of them came to believe we stopped paying attention to working class the way we used to. A lot of them came to believe that the Democratic Party stopped caring about them.

And lots of folks feel that way today still, but we're making inroads. We're turning it around.

My first 2 years in office, we created 750,000 manufacturing jobs. And, by the way, where is it written America can't lead the world again in manufacturing? Where is that written?

Our economic agenda created a boom in manufacturing with semiconductor chips, to electric vehicles, advanced batteries that are going to power the vehicles, in addition to building 500,000

charging stations all across America. There have been major private investments, totaling nearly \$300 billion, much of which is in just one industry, semiconductors, generating significant job opportunities in manufacturing in America.

For decades—for decades—we imported products and exported jobs. Now America is exporting products and creating jobs, because we're doing something that for years and years people just talked about: We're buying American.

Buying American is not just—by that I mean, the Government is buying American. My administration—I'm—there's a law back in the early thirties that we never paid much attention to. It said when the President spends your tax dollars to put a new deck on an aircraft carrier or build a highway, it should be built by Americans and American products.

Well, guess what? My administration is doing it. Buying American is a reality.

We just made a lot of progress overseas as well, in the past 2 years. Jobs are up, wages are up, inflation is down, and COVID no longer controls our lives.

But now the extreme MAGA Republicans in the House of Representatives have made it clear they intend to put it all at risk. They intend to destroy——

Audience members. Boo!

The President. No, I'm—not a joke. When I—look, you may remember when, during the off-year election, I started talking about MAGA Republicans and democracy. And a lot of you thought: "What the hell is he talking about? Why isn't he talking about A, B, C, or D specific issue?"

Well, guess what? They intend to destroy the—this is not your father's Republican Party. No, really, think about it. These aren't conservatives. These aren't conservatives. These are disruptive people. They intend to destroy the progress we made.

Folks, as I said, this is not your father's Republican Party. Just take a look what's—they're doing. They campaigned on fiscal responsibility, but the first bill to pass the House of Representatives added \$114 billion to the deficit. The first one.

They introduced another bill to limit the President's authority over the Strategic Petroleum Reserve because they're mad I used that authority to lower gas prices by \$1.50 a gallon. Period.

Look, they introduced a bill—this is going to—you think I'm—when I said this stuff in the off-year, people looked at me like I was nuts. They're nuts. I'm not the one. *[Laughter]*.

They introduced a bill that will eliminate the IRS and replace it with a 30-percent national sales tax.

Audience members. Boo!

The President. Oh, no. You heard me: 30-percent national sales tax. Think about—that means 30 percent on groceries, gasoline, clothing, school supplies, medicine, big-ticket items like rent and cars. Shifting the entire burden to the working class and middle class of America. It's not going to happen. I'm going to veto the sucker if it ever got to me. It's not going to happen.

I know the Republicans ran on inflation last election. I didn't know they were trying to make it worse. *[Laughter]*

And of course, as they always do, they still want to cut taxes on the wealthiest and biggest corporations.

Audience members. Boo!

Audience member. [Inaudible] [Laughter]

The President. By the way, you know, the idea—you've got to be kidding me. No billionaire should pay a lower tax rate than a schoolteacher or firefighter because that's what they—

By the way, there's a thousand billionaires, and they pay an average of 3 percent in taxes. Three percent. For God name, what is this all about?

Republicans keep talking about what they're going to do to Social Security and Medicare. Americans have been paying into Medicare since you got your first paycheck when you were 16 years old and Social Security since you started working.

Well, I got a better idea. I'm going to strengthen Social Security and Medicare, not gut it.

If people making over \$400,000 a year paid at the same rate that everybody making \$60-, \$70-, \$80-, \$90-, \$139,000 a year—up to—guess what? Social Security and Medicare would grow strong without—without—cutting benefits, without raising taxes on a single person making under 400 grand.

Look, so let's make it real simple: If Republicans try to cut Social Security—it's not going to get by the Senate, in my view—but I'll stop them. If they try to cut Medicare, I'll stop them. I've got a veto pen. If they try to pass the 30-percent national sales tax, I'll stop them. And if they send me a national ban on the right to choose, I will stop them.

Look—look, folks, now we're in a situation: If Republicans want to work together to find real solutions to grow manufacturing jobs; to build the strongest economy in the world and keep it that way, which we are now; where Americans are paid a fair wage; make their wealth and begin to pay their share of taxes, I'm ready. I'm ready.

I'm not going to let anyone use the full faith and credit of the United States as a bargaining chip—the so-called national debt. The national debt has been accumulated over 220 years. We're paying interest on that debt that was accumulated over 220 years. And guess what? We've never missed a single payment. The United States is a nation who pays its bills.

And, folks, for as much as we've gotten done over the past 2 years, we have some unfinished business on our agenda.

We need to make the cost of insulin 35 bucks a month for every American, including 200,000 kids out there. We need to pass childcare and family paid leave. We need to restore the expanded child tax credit that cut child poverty nearly in half.

And we need to ban assault weapons and limit the number of bullets that can be in a magazine. I did it once before as a United States Senator, and we'll do it again.

And by the way, yesterday—just yesterday the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals struck down a law that bars domestic abusers—and I wrote the Violence Against Women Act—bars domestic abusers who are under a restraining order to stay away from the woman or child they abused from possessing a firearm. They struck it down.

And by the way—

Audience members. Boo!

The President. —they're eight times as likely to get shot if you're in that situation.

Look, the court struck down a commonsense law that's been on the books for 30 years. They're saying it's okay for someone under a restraining order, who are threatening their partner or their child, to own a firearm. It's outrageous. It's literally—it's dangerous. Abusers are five times more likely to kill his female victim if he's armed with a gun.

I respect the right of responsible gun owners. But someone who has threatened or beaten a domestic partner is not a responsible gun owner. And the courts should be on the side of the victims of domestic violence, not on the side of the abusers.

Look, it's an example of why it's so important—we've confirmed nearly 100 Federal judges in just 2 years. And we are committed to keeping up the pace.

We need to codify *Roe v. Wade*. We need to pass the John Lewis Voting Rights and Advancement Act and the Freedom to Vote Act.

And with the tragic death of Tyre Nichols, we are reminded once again, we have to pass safeguards that were built into the George Floyd Policing Act. This is what I did as your—on the Federal level. I signed the strongest Executive order ever to reform Federal police practices. I did my job.

How many more—how many more horrible tragedies, how many more ghastly videos do we have—needless death—do we have to see before Congress steps up and does its job?

Folks, I truly believe we're living in an inflection point in modern history. It comes along every four or five generations, where what happens in a short period of time in a country or around the world has a fundamental effect for the next three to four decades.

Whether it's—we're talking about dealing with the climate crisis—look, if we don't move on the climate crisis, we don't—we're going to see the—you know, the North Pole, as the kids would say—we're going to see those glaciers melting. We're going to see sea levels rising up to 3 feet.

That means we carry a heavy responsibility, and it means we have an extraordinary opportunity as well: an extraordinary opportunity to build the future we want for our children and grandchildren. It hadn't been available to us in the past. An extraordinary opportunity to build America and a world that's more fair and just and more free. And that—that fills me with optimism.

I don't want to keep you standing much longer. I'll just say one more thing. *[Laughter]* You know what? America is back, and we're leading the world again. We are.

We're uniting Europe. We've united the—we've united the—Asia, Japan. We've—Japan is doing more than it's ever done. We have AUKUS, the—dealing with everything from Australia to India. We're uniting the world.

In fact, I've never been more optimistic about America's future than I am today.

I've always believed you could define American in one word. I spent a lot of time with Xi Jinping when I was Vice President, the last couple of years. And Barak asked me to spend time with him because we knew he was going to be President; it wasn't appropriate for a President be spending all the time.

No, I mean it sincerely. So I traveled 17,000 miles with him. I met with him more than any other world leader, now over 80 hours—68 of which were in person—just me, an interpreter, and he had a simultaneous interpreter.

We were in a Tibetan Plateau. And he looked at me and he said, "Can you define America for me?" And I mean this sincerely. I give you my word as a Biden. I said, "Yes, one word: possibilities."

That's why we—in many cases, we're viewed as the ugly Americans, because we think anything is possible. No, I really mean it. Think about it. Can you name me one major initiative we united to do as Americans we didn't get done? I mean one.

Folks, look, I still believe that today because there's literally nothing we can't do if we put our mind to it. We just have to remember who in God's name we are. We're the United States of America.

Nothing is beyond our—no, really—nothing is beyond our capacity. And we're the only nation in the world that's come out of every crisis stronger than before we went in. And that's what we're doing now.

God bless you all, and may God protect our troops. Thank you, thank you, thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:03 p.m. at the Sheraton Philadelphia Downtown hotel. In his remarks, he referred to Jaime R. Harrison, chairman, Democratic National Committee; Gov. Joshua D. Shapiro of Pennsylvania; Sen. John K. Fetterman; President Xi Jinping of China; and former President Barak Obama. The transcript was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on February 4.

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